THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN): (a) and (b) There are guidelines for examining proposals for commemorative stamps and these, *inter-alia,* stipulate that a stamp may be issued on a personality of national or international importance on the occasion of birth centenary or to mark the 10th/25th/100th death anniversary.

(c) No, Sir. The proposal for issue of commemorative stamp on Shri Prabodhankar Thackeray was received in 1998 to mark his 25th death anniversary. After processing this could be issued in 2002.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

Conversion of Telephone Exchanges into Electronic Exchanges in Rajasthan

1637. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA:

SHRI SANTHOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minster of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether all telephone exchanges in all major cities of Rajasthan have been converted to electronic exchanges;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) by when the said conversion would take place?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. All the 2223 exchanges in Rajasthan as on 15.7.2002 are of Electronic type.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Tele-Density Gap between Rural and Urban Areas

1638. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a wide gap between urban and rural areas in regard to tele-density in as much as for every 100 persons in rural areas only one person is having telephone connection against 10 in urban areas;

(b) if so, whether his Ministry has analysed the reasons therefor;

(c) what steps Government propose to take to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas in terms of tele-density;

(d) whether Government propose to give subsidy on rentals and telephone calls for rural people; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHANJAN): (a) Yes, Sir. There is a wide gap between Urban and Rural areas. The average tele-density in Rural and Urban areas are 1.24 and 12.24 respectively as on 31.5.02.

(b) The tele-density depends on demand which is further dependent upon—

(i) Per capita income

(ii) Development activities

(iii) Business and commercial opportunities

(iv) Literacy rate

The tele-density in Urban areas is generally higher due to concentrated nature of demand and higher levels of business and commercial activities in these areas.

(c) to (e) A number of policy measures have been taken during the past few years to expand and telecom services in the rural areas. The New Telecom Policy-99 stipulates several specific objectives and time bond targets of tele-density and rural telephony. These are *inter-alia*, increasing the rural tele-density from current level to 4% by the year 2010 and to achieve telecome coverage of all the villages in the country and also to provide reliable media to all the telephone exchanges.

Further to above, as per the Telecommunication Tariff (Twentieth Amendment) Order, 2002 notified on 14th March, 2002 rental and call charges are lower for rural areas in comparision to urban areas (and, are in fact below cost level). This is so in the interest of affordability. As per recommendations of TRAI on Universal Service Obligation (USO) submitted

to the Government last year, "all rural Short Distance Charging Areas which are high cost areas. *i.e.* where total revenue is less than total cost, are to receive subsidy from Universal Service Fund to be created for this purpose". The Universal Service Fund has become operation w.e.f. 1.4.2002.

Difficulties in Garuda WLL Mobile Service

1639. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether MTNL, Mumbai is facing any problems of difficulties in Garuda WLL Mobile Service, while operating in Mumbai;

(b) if so, the details of the difficulties and the complaints received by MTNL from consumers; and

(c) what action has been taken to improve the service?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Delails of difficulties faced and complaints received from the customers of Garuda WLL Mobile Service operating in Mumbai with the action taken are given below:

1. Coverage problems in certain areas: Many complaints were received regarding improper coverage, most of these complaints are pertaining to a western suburbs of Mumbai wherein *site optimization* has been carried out and new base station site is also added on 13-7-2002.

2. Service outage complaints: Garuda network services were disrupted as a result of malfunctioning of BSC equipment on many occasions between 07-06-2002 to 03-07-2002. Experts from the equipment supplier (M/s. Fujitsu India Ltd.) were called from Japan and consequent upon some software upgradation by them, the network is stable since 04-07-2002. Experts from M/s. Fujitsu are still in Mumbai to further investigate and conclusively resolve the problem.

3. Call Congestion in Kalbadevi Area: As a result of *concentrated* subscriber presence in Kalbadevi locality, the call failure rate on account of heavy telephone traffic is more in Kalbadevi Area. *Site optimization* has already been taken up to minimize the call failure rate.